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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE VALUE OF CLIMATIC STATISTICS

The weather forecaster tells us of tomorrow's weather. The climatologist tells us, in terms of averages, what weather may be expected to prevail in a given locality for years to come, as inferred from past experience. The gathering of climatic statistics is as important a part of the activities of a meteorological service as the daily prediction of weather. It is accomplished through the patient efforts of thousands of observers, the majority of whom serve without pay.

The statistics thus obtained play an indispensable part in agriculture, engineering, transportation, sanitation, medicine, biology, physical geography and various other branches of science and industry. Consider, for example, that in the one business of insurance detailed information is needed concerning the prevalence of such phenomena as lightning, tornadoes, hailstorms and rainfall, and that in order to assemble such information for a large country millions of observations must be taken during a long period of years, and you will begin to grasp the magnitude of the work that the world's meteorological establishments are carrying on in a field entirely apart from forecasting.

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